leadership
2009

The Nebraska
Community Leadership
Handbook

THE NEBRASKA COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

"Our human landscape is our unwitting autobiography, reflecting our tastes, our values, our aspirations, and even our fears, in tangible, visible form." -Peirce K. Lewis

Program Overview

The Nebraska Community Leadership Handbook (NCLH) is a community-based development initiative designed to create and sustain regional leadership and capacity building. Serving as a baseline leadership development curriculum, this program anticipates the creation of a local, ongoing cycle that trains citizen-leaders who are not only committed to preserving their region's sense of place, but who share a common vision and commitment to actions, programs and philosophies that promote the region's priorities. The current "leader at the top" concept has been replaced with one that recognizes the value of a networked team and the important role it plays in building a community's social, intellectual, and cultural capital.

The NCLH is designed to be facilitated primarily by local volunteers, and therefore emphasizes a networking/orientation model vs. a skill development model (e.g., conflict mediation, learning and leadership styles). Participants will reflect the diversity of the community, (including representatives from organizations and local service providers). The curriculum consists of four development steps: ***Identifying Local Leadership; Community Assessment and Planning; The "Big Five" Community Issues – A Case Study Approach;*** *and* ***The Community Capstone Project.***

Goals and outcomes of these sessions include:

1. Increase human capacity by developing individual leadership skills;

2. Increase social capacity using a case-study approach that facilitates the awareness of regional issues, state and local resources and processes;

3. Increase cultural capacity by examining assets that give the region a unique sense of place;

4. Implementation - Participants will collaborate on a group "capstone project" that implements what has been learned over the previous course sessions. Project results will be documented and submitted to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development for review and recognition.
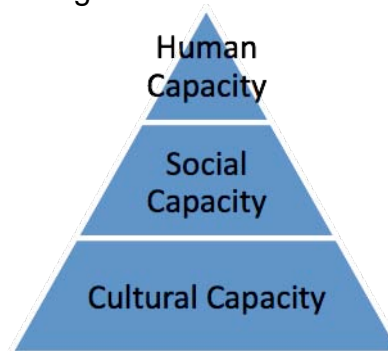
You and the citizens of your community and region know that it takes local vision, energy, and collaboration to ensure ongoing regional vitality and growth, but true leadership stems from a group of involved, networked citizens and this curriculum is the beginning of that network chain.

PART I: IDENTIFYING LOCAL LEADERSHIP

In a 2004 interview with *Forbes* magazine, Peter Drucker, whose name is synonymous with leadership, shared his thoughts on the subject:

Successful leaders don't start out asking, "What do I want to do?" They ask "What needs to be done?" Then they ask "Of those things that would make a difference, which are right for me?" They don't tackle things they aren't good at. They make sure other necessities get done, but not by them. Successful leaders make sure that they succeed! They are not afraid of strength in others.

The truth is, we all are leaders in some capacity. This module is designed to help you see and develop your leadership skills in the context of others to build a more meaningful community experience. In most community organizations, leadership comes from volunteers who may not have had extensive experience with governmental infrastructures. Through exercises and case studies, volunteer leaders will gain a deeper understanding of community organization and the public issues that shape every community.

The **five public issues** that concern all communities are:
1. Employment
2. Housing
3. Health
4. Education
5. Government (local, regional, state)

Preparing a new generation of leaders requires at least a working knowledge of how these diverse arenas contribute to a healthy community. The first step is to understand the generational differences, values, and unique perspectives of the volunteers who serve, work, and live in your community.

VOLUNTEERS: WHO BRINGS WHAT TO THE TABLE?

In every community, volunteers provide the critical human/social capital that drives projects and directs change. Never before have so many generations assembled at the same "volunteer table." Working as teams, generational differences and perspectives are bound to emerge. Understanding these generational viewpoints and the values that drive them can help project leaders place the right volunteers in the most effective places.

Here's a quick overview of what each generation brings to the table based on models made popular by authors such as Thom Rainer and Gary L. McIntosh, among others:

Builders (Born before 1945)
These volunteers tend to be diligent and committed to resolving issues. Their strong work ethic plays out in their efforts to accomplish goals. However, Builders are not usually excited about change, and view technology as a nuisance. This generation exhibits a great deal of loyalty and tends to work with the same organization or company for many years. They prefer consistency and a top-down approach to group work.

Boomers (Born between 1946- 1964)
The oft-talked about Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) often display "can do" attitudes as they strive to overcome any and all obstacles before them. Boomers tend to value learning, which is observed in their efforts to be on the cutting edge. However, they're also most closely identified with the "Me" generation and it's not uncommon for them to be viewed as rebellious in their approach to challenging policies and rules. They believe in growth, expansion and change, and are not afraid to work long hours to meet objectives.

Busters (also know as "GEN-X'ers" born between 1965 – 1984)
Opinions vary on the age range of Busters. Some says this generation was born between 1965 and 1984), while others say the Buster wave ended in 1976. Regardless, Busters are very good at building and valuing strong relationships, and interested in protecting the natural environment. However, corporate goals are often assigned a lower priority than individual goals, and corporate leaders who have large visions are viewed with suspicion. Actions that could actually help a business grow may be discounted if a Buster doesn't see how those actions add value to individuals as people.

Bridgers (Born since 1985) Generation "Q" as in Quiet
Recently coined "Generation Q" – the Quiet Generation – by Thomas Friedman (*New York Times* 10/10/2007), this group is comprised of individuals in their mid-20s or younger. Also known as Bridgers, they are often confident, ambitious, and community-oriented. Having grown up totally in the computer age, they are enthusiastic and adept at incorporating technology into the workplace. Because Internet use became commonplace in their formative years, Bridgers are skilled at accessing the surplus of knowledge available to them. So far, Bridgers have been observed to be entrepreneurial and resourceful. On the down side, being used to a culture of readily-accessed information and entertainment, Bridgers may get easily bored if they're not being mentally stimulated in some way, and as Friedman points out, may consequently be slow or hesitant to take an activist role.

VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP: WHO, WHEN, HOW LONG

Increasingly, the success of many civic and non-profit organizations rests with the quality and quantity of volunteers willing to donate their time and talent. While demand for volunteer labor has grown, the actual time most volunteers have to give to any organization has decreased over the last several decades. More organizations are competing for a limited pool of volunteer hours.   What motivates people to volunteer has not changed over time. Most often, people volunteer:

- to make a difference
- to gain experience
- to be with people
- to respond to a cause
- to have fun.

However, organizations often lose effective volunteers for the following reasons:

1. Volunteers and required task are a mismatch
2. Poorly defined task/supervision
3. Lack of required training
4. Lack of volunteer recognition

Keeping volunteers engaged and effective is part of a good communications plan. When engaging volunteers in your organization, it is more important than ever to:

- Review the boundaries of the job: Define policies and procedures – agree on a brief job description;
- Adequately train: Providing tools necessary for success is essential. For example, if the volunteer is to conduct a telephone survey, make sure you provide them with a list of questions and an "information cheat sheet."
- Communicate: Inform the volunteer of the scope of the project and why his or her efforts are important to the success of the project.

- Communicate: Regularly ask if the volunteer has questions or concerns.
- Provide Feedback: Ask for feedback once the task is completed. What worked? What can be improved?
- Reward and Recognize: Recognition = Retention. Be sure your organization has an active volunteer recognition plan already in place.

Volunteer opportunities requiring long-term commitments can be problematic for people whose time is already at a premium (Little, 1999). With creativity, organizations can find ways to tap the talent of those who want to volunteer without the demands of a long-term commitment. Organizations need to be aware and take advantage of the different types of volunteers, which include:

Short-term Volunteers:
Short-term volunteer opportunities might include tasks/positions that have definitive start and end dates. Even though some volunteer positions require extended commitments, many tasks can be successfully completed on a short-term basis. Short-term assignments also give new volunteers a chance to "get their feet wet". In addition, short-term volunteer opportunities are good options for parents of young children, and families that are busy with their children's school and sport activities. For many, a short-term volunteer commitment is the only option.

High School & College Volunteers and Interns:
Statistics show that today's youth are among the most active volunteers. Students are most likely to volunteer for activities at the start of the fall and spring semesters. (Often college students leave campus during holiday breaks and summer months.) Offer volunteer opportunities that relate to career interests for local students. Also, be sure to offer letters of support for scholarships and other award recognition methods for youth that are active volunteers in the community.

The Virtual Volunteer:
Many people are looking for volunteer opportunities that they can complete via their home or work computers and the Internet. Virtual volunteering allows anyone to contribute time and expertise for tasks, such as helping design web pages, newsletters, and brochures using their home computers. Virtual volunteers can also help with phone surveys, etc. Remember, just because this volunteer may work from home, he or she should still be included in any recognition efforts and be given detailed instructions and guidance, if needed.

Working with New Volunteers:
New volunteers usually begin with several questions and concerns. They may be concerned about not being able to get away when they are finished and many may worry that they will be expected to be as active as other long-term volunteers in your organization.   It's a good idea to call on seasoned volunteers to mentor those who come into your organization for the first time to help with task orientation and provide back-up for questions and concerns.

There will be times when a volunteer won't be able to fulfill their commitment due to unforeseen circumstances. It's always a good idea to recruit "volunteer understudies" for more critical tasks.

"THE RIGHT FIT" – USING A VOLUNTEER RESOURCE SURVEY

To better help volunteers find the right "niche," an interest/skills survey can be useful. Below is a sample survey that can be used to gain a better understanding of your community's volunteer base.

VOLUNTEER RESOURCE SURVEY

Contact Information

Name	
Street Address	
City State ZIP Code	
Home Phone	
Work Phone	
E-Mail Address	

Availability

During which hours are you available for volunteer assignments?

___ Weekday mornings   ___ Weekend mornings

___ Weekday afternoons   ___ Weekend afternoons

___ Weekday evenings   ___ Weekend evenings

Interests

Tell us in which areas you are interested in volunteering:

___ Community Organizing

___ Event Planning

___ Finance

___ Fundraising

___ Education/Tutoring

___ Computer/Web Skills

___ Newsletter Production

___ Working with Youth

___ Working with Seniors

___ Data Entry

___ Marketing/Advertising

___ Education/Tutoring

___ Grant Writing

___ Public Speaking

___ Volunteer Coordination

___ Research and Surveys

___ Other:

Tell us why you are
interested in volunteering
with our organization:

Special Skills or Qualifications

Summarize special skills and qualifications you have acquired from employment, previous volunteer work, or through other activities, including hobbies or sports.

Person to Notify in Case of Emergency

Name	
Street Address	
City State ZIP Code	
Home Phone	
Work Phone	
E-Mail Address	

Our Policy

It is the policy of this organization to provide equal opportunities without regard to race, religion, national origin, gender, sexual preference, age, or disability.

Thank you for completing this application form and for your interest in volunteering with us.

Are You Ready to Hire An Economic Developer?

Many small to medium sized communities operate with a volunteer economic development board or committee. However, at some point that board will grapple with the question: Is it time for our community to hire economic development staff?
Economic development professionals usually are hired to do some or all of the following:

- ➢ **Promote and market the community/region**
- ➢ **Assist local industry in maintaining their competitiveness**
- ➢ **Encourage new business start-ups**
- ➢ **Attract new business and industry**
- ➢ **Implement the region's development vision and strategy**
- ➢ **Access outside sources of capital/funding for projects**
- ➢ **Assist in infrastructure improvements**
- ➢ **Liaison with local, state, and federal agencies**

So when is a community or region ready to hire development staff?

Often the catalyst for hiring comes from:

1) A regional economic assessment or study;

2) Realization that a local economic trend or challenge needs full attention; or

3) When a community is faced with a significant event (the loss of an industry or business).

Not every community can afford to hire economic development staff to recruit new businesses to town and keep those they already have, and for many small communities, it can be a difficult to find and retain someone

qualified for the job. To meet those challenges, some communities have sought a regional approach to hiring economic development staff.

When considering hiring a professional to coordinate the planning and development of economic development plans, the first question is usually: "How much will this cost?" Followed by, "Where will the money come from?"   While important, the resources most needed before hiring an economic development professional are financial – they are:

1) Commitment from key community stakeholders and leaders;

2) Research

Commitment from key community leaders and stakeholders is essential to guide the hiring process; and then to assist and support the economic development professional once hired.

Research, however, is critical to the question of hiring a professional at the outset. Research will help an economic development organization understand possible areas of funding for the position; reasonable hiring requirements; input into defining effective job descriptions and evaluations; and the role and responsibilities of the economic development board.

Some of those research sources are:

➢ Nebraska Public Power partners
➢ Nebraska Department of Economic Development – particularly regarding LB840 legislation
➢ The Nebraska Economic Developers Association
➢ Interviews with other community economic development organizations

Finally, a sound vision and strategy for your community's economic development plan will provide the catalyst and energy to interest both potential candidates and the community.

LEADING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING

"Nothing is so fatiguing as the eternal hanging-on of an unfinished task." - Henry James

The first rule of an effective meeting is: "Don't convene a meeting unless it is the best way to handle the issue." If a meeting is called for then it matters. Community leaders and volunteers should take these meetings and their participation in them seriously.

Meeting Imperatives
1. **Objectives:** Do you have clear meeting objectives? (What does the group hope to achieve/outcomes?)
2. **Actionable Agenda Items**: Reports can be distributed, but agenda items should be action-oriented and require a decision.
3. **Punctuality:** Start on time. The agenda is your contract with meeting participants. If the agenda states that the meeting will begin at 12:00 p.m. and end at 1:00 p.m., then *plan* to honor the time your volunteers give.
4. **Management:** Manage the conversations. Don't let one person "take over" any issue or conversation. To avoid "conversation domination," agenda items can be introduced by different committee members.
5. **Meeting closure:** Make sure everyone understands who will do what by when.

Effective agendas can often be handled as a task template:

Topic	Actionable Outcome	Person(s) Responsible	Timeframe (What Happens Next)

Leadership Succession – What Is Our Plan?

Leadership succession has been called the last challenge of leadership. In many community organizations, leadership transition is a pressing concern. Many long-time community leaders eventually retire from public service, and today business managers and executives who often serve in positions of community leadership can no longer count on staying in one community for the duration of their career. These situations can create a leadership vacuum within any community.

By developing an on-going leadership succession plan, an organization creates a "pipeline of leadership." This exercise asks your group to explore leadership succession strategies for your community:

1. How and where does our community find its leaders?

2. What attributes are we looking for as we identify potential leaders?

3. How do we develop local leadership capacity?

4. What type(s) of leadership training do we provide?

5. How do we encourage potential leaders to accept position on our boards and committees?

6. How do we engage youth and develop their leadership skills?

7. How do we show appreciation for our volunteer leaders?

Creating a leadership succession strategy mean taking a look at the critical roles volunteer leaders provide in the community. Strategies for succession might include:

➢ **Identify the key leadership functions within your organization;**

➢ **Create a community "leadership inventory." Beyond local business connections, consider looking at those who serve in:**

Community colleges; PTA organization; higher education institution; libraries; arts community; law enforcement; job training organization; law offices; health organization;, ethnic organization;, family service; community planning; faith-based community; financial institutions; media; real estate, and agri-business professionals, to name a few.

➢ **Facilitate opportunities for emerging leaders to "shadow" and learn by teaming with leaders who have key roles in community organizations.**

➢ **Provide community leadership training programs.**

PART II: COMMUNITY PROGRAM ANALYSIS – BEGINNING THE PROCESS

Over the past several years, the foundation of community and regional economic development has evolved beyond the single focus of business attraction and expansion. While job creation remains the hub of the economic development wheel, communities have begun to take a more holistic approach to their development strategies. These strategies include a renewed emphasis and investment in all components of the community landscape such as: health care, physical infrastructure quality, education, housing, tourism, and even "soft targets" such as investments in population recruitment, cultural activities, and ready access to a variety of recreational activities.

Much has been written about our new "flat and global" world and in response to this, many communities have begun to take a new view of their assets and diversity. Within this new framework, community leaders and volunteers see themselves as architects – structuring a new vision of community using components of the 'old' while building their community's future legacy. "Thus we confront the central problem: Any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our heads" (Meining).

The following section will lead participants through exercises designed to help groups complete a comprehensive economic development strategy that draws on the resources and expertise of both public and private sectors. This plan will serve as a "roadmap" for establishing regional goals and objectives; developing and implementing a plan of action; and identifying human and financial resources and investment priorities. This development strategy will draw from learning outcomes listed in Section 1 – "Community-Based Leadership." Using this planning process, communities will be asked to identify an issue that results in a culminating project with the goal of solving a regional or community-based economic development problem, and clearly defining the elements of project success.

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

"We Have Talked This Thing to Death!"

Have you ever served on a committee or in an organization where it seems that the same problems and issues continue to surface without resolution? It's hard to gather momentum when the same issues seem to block progress. In many instances the problem solving process gets stuck because it's approached from the problem's end – the "How" – how will we fix this problem? Or how are we going to find the money for "X" problem.

While it is tempting to begin the planning process from the back end: "<u>How</u> are we going to do _____?" A useful place to begin is to rid ourselves of some assumptions:
- **That everyone sees "X" as a problem;**
- **That space is neutral and activities can be manipulated and freely located within any space; and**
- **Change is only possible with outside assistance.**

The following approach to problem solving is designed to move problem _statements_ to problem _resolution_ – and the first step in that process is problem definition.

1. <u>Defining the problem</u>

Many problem solving efforts begin with the idea that everyone agrees that "X" is the problem. In the <u>definition</u> stage, the problem or issue is described before an action is ascribed. In the definition stage, be clear about:

- ➢ What makes this an issue or problem (does everyone agree? Is this a problem for only a sector of the community?)
- ➢ What relationships are involved in this issue?
- ➢ Does this issue/problem have inherent constraints? (e.g., are there aspects of this problem that are not within our power/jurisdiction to influence?)

➢ 2. <u>**Gather information and chart the problem solving process:**</u>

Depending on the type of issue or problem, information gathering can take several forms: interviews; questionnaires; or even town hall meetings. It is important that all who will be affected by this issue have an opportunity to offer perspective.

➢ **Understand the consequences: What happens and who benefits and who does not if changes are made; if changes are not made.**
➢ **What resources will be needed to implement change?**
➢ **Identify the change objective: How will we know we have solved this issue/problem?**
➢ **Agree on solution steps.**

Once these steps are in place, you can begin the planning:

The best place to begin our planning is by asking "why?"

- *Why* is this goal important?
- *Why* this project?
- Who benefits / who does not?

Once these rationales are established, moving to "how?" is much easier.

(Now that we understand the difference between "how" and "why," it is beneficial to look back on the past activities that have taken place within your community and get a better understanding on why they were undertaken, what were the outcomes of each activity and how this information can be used in moving your community forward).

CURRENT COMMUNITY PROGRAM ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

"Consider what happens when a person says, "I need a drink of water" rather than "I am thirsty." He has described a problem (thirst) in terms of a solution (water). But water is only <u>one</u> way of handling the problem of thirst." (Krile, 2006).

This exercise is designed to help the group identify past program successes or barriers to program success. Using the worksheet, evaluate current programs conducted in your community/ region, such as Business Retention & Expansion programs, strategic plans, and community or economic development programs, on the basis of how they are or are not addressing their goals with measurable outcomes. Be prepared to discuss how each of the programs impacts your community, as well as how they can be improved or strengthened.

Current Program	Program Objective (Why is it important?)	Strength or Improvement Goals	Program Impact for Community/Region
Sample: Business Retention & Expansion Surveys	*Learn the needs of the businesses currently located in the community.*	*Develop a follow-up program with the businesses that requested help to make sure all of their questions/needs have been addressed. Build business database.*	*Community was able to assist the business find expansion funding.*

COMMUNITY BASED STRATEGIC PLANNING

"This much seems clear: Effective change cannot be imposed from outside…the key ingredients in a successful development strategy are ownership and participation." (Joseph Stiglitz, World Bank, 1998)

Communities that are most effective and best positioned to meet the challenges of changing economies, local fiscal fluctuations, and population shifts are those unwilling to accept the status quo. Communities that apply a systematic process to evaluating their future find it possible to influence the economic destiny of their community when well-directed actions are implemented (Kolzow, 1991).

Framing Your Community's Future:
While strategic planning guides and templates can support the planning process, the plan's formal structure is less important than its actual **vision** of community transformation. Often referred to as a blueprint or roadmap, an effective development strategy is more like a *living document* – outlining how transformation and changes will be created and adopted; and detailing the participation process by which consensus and local ownership will be obtained and sustained, and how the plan will be actualized and success will be measured.

Surveying Your Community's Landscape:
"*It is the process of self-examination, the confrontation of difficult choices, and the establishment of priorities that characterize successful strategic planning"* (Goodstein).

There are many approaches for charting a community's preferred future. The goal of any method, however, is to retain what works and also constructively frame strategies for future opportunities. The essential ingredient in your success will be the degree to which the community residents feel that their views, priorities and concerns are addressed.

COMMUNITY PLANNING WORKSHEET

A facilitated meeting will allow participants to define the best of their community and how to preserve these attributes, as well as envision the changes necessary to move it toward a preferred future.   The following questions may be helpful in this process:

1. What are the things that we value most right now about our community/region and want to be a part of our future community/region? Why? (Focus: what works and why).

2. What has not worked well in our community? Reasons? (Focus: identifying barriers to past progress)

3. Can we recall a time/situation in which we as a community "got it right?" What made that time/situation so effective? (Focus: how we've been successful in the past)

4.   What are the best methods for analyzing the community internally and externally through surveys and other methods?

   A. *Internal Analysis* evaluates the community's or organization's internal strengths and weaknesses. These might include issues related to:
   - Organizational structure
   - Communication
   - Financial capabilities
   - Staffing
   - Planning

Although strengths and weaknesses are internal, consider the perspective of those who regularly interact with the community or organization, as well. Don't be afraid to discuss strengths and weaknesses!   The goal is to:
- Build on Strengths
- Minimize Weaknesses
- Position the Community to Take Advantage of Opportunities
- Confront Threats with Solutions

B.   *External Analysis* evaluates the surrounding environment and provides a survey of significant external events and trends. It examines a community's or organization's current competitiveness with room for appraising its position.

These factors could include:
- Industry Trends
- Tourism Opportunities
- Population/Demographic changes
- Technology Issues
- Connections with Regional Groups

5. What action(s) can be taken to most impact the future of our community/region?

6. What would it take to create change on this issue?

7. What needs immediate attention going forward?

8. Create a vision statement which captures the community's ideals.

IDENTIFYING STRATEGIC ISSUES

Don't ever confuse motion with progress." - Hadley's Law

Once you have gathered input to the above questions, the next step is to reach consensus about the most important issues. Utilize the following steps to move from ideas to plans to completed project:

A. Form Goals – Where *have you been and where do you want to go?*

B. Create Timelines – *Identify key dates to keep plan on track.*

C. Assign Responsibilities – *Who are project leaders/volunteers?*

D. Allocate Resources – *How will we fund the project? What is the process?*

E. Create Accountability – Develop y*our communication plan.*

F. Celebrate Success – *Celebrate with volunteers and the community.*

G. Review/Next Steps Follow-up – *Keep the momentum going.*
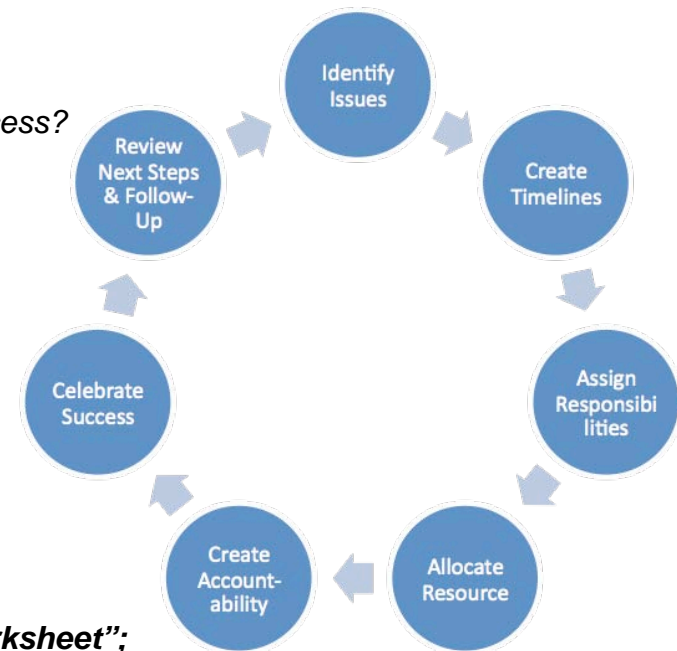
Use the sample worksheets and information guides on the following pages to develop the community data that is essential to goal setting.

Forms include:
"Community Development Survey"; "Former Resident Survey";
"Planning Process Worksheet"; "Developing Your Funding Source Worksheet";
and "Developing Your Communication Plan".

SAMPLE: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SURVEY

| Name (optional): |
| Age: |
| Occupation: |

For each question/issue below, circle the number to the right
that best fits your opinion on the importance of the issue.

Question/Issue	Scale of Importance				
	Not at all	Not very	No Opinion	Some-what	Extremely
Sample: *How important is it to our community to upgrade the current park and recreational facilities?*	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5

Former Resident Survey

A New Recruitment Strategy

Many communities and counties face the challenge of steadily declining populations. This decline in resident population has spurred many communities to embrace a strategy of recruitment of former residents. "Former Resident" surveys have several aims:

1) To understand the characteristics of their community that are attractive to former residents;
2) How their community compares to the area where their former residents now reside;
3) Solicit their input on ways to encourage former residents to return – either to raise their families or to retire.

These surveys can take many forms: either mailed survey forms or phone interviews; or surveys conducted at annual reunion functions.

While the following list is by no means comprehensive or represents a scientific survey instrument, former resident survey questions are generally focused around the following issues:

1) How would you compare _____, Nebraska with the community you now live in?

> **(Add ranking schedules such as: excellent, good, less favorable, etc.)**
> - **Job opportunities**
> - **Learning opportunities**
> - **Social & cultural opportunities**
> - **Health care quality/availability**
> - **Salary/wage levels**
> - **A good place to raise a family**
> - **Housing affordability**
> - **A good place to retire**

2) **How often to do you visit _____, Nebraska?**
   - **Once a year**
   - **More than once a year**
   - **Every few years**
   - **Seldom**

3) **Do you still own property in _____, Nebraska?**

4) **Do you own/lease property in your current community?**

5) **When and why did you leave _____, Nebraska?**

6) **What is the likelihood of your returning to _____, Nebraska?**

7) **What do you value most about _____, Nebraska?**

8) **What strategies would you recommend to recruit former residents back to _____, Nebraska?**

Gaining an understanding of your community through the eyes of those who once lived there, but have located to other areas, will enable you to develop a sustainable recruitment effort and gain important information that can guide your future strategic planning activities.
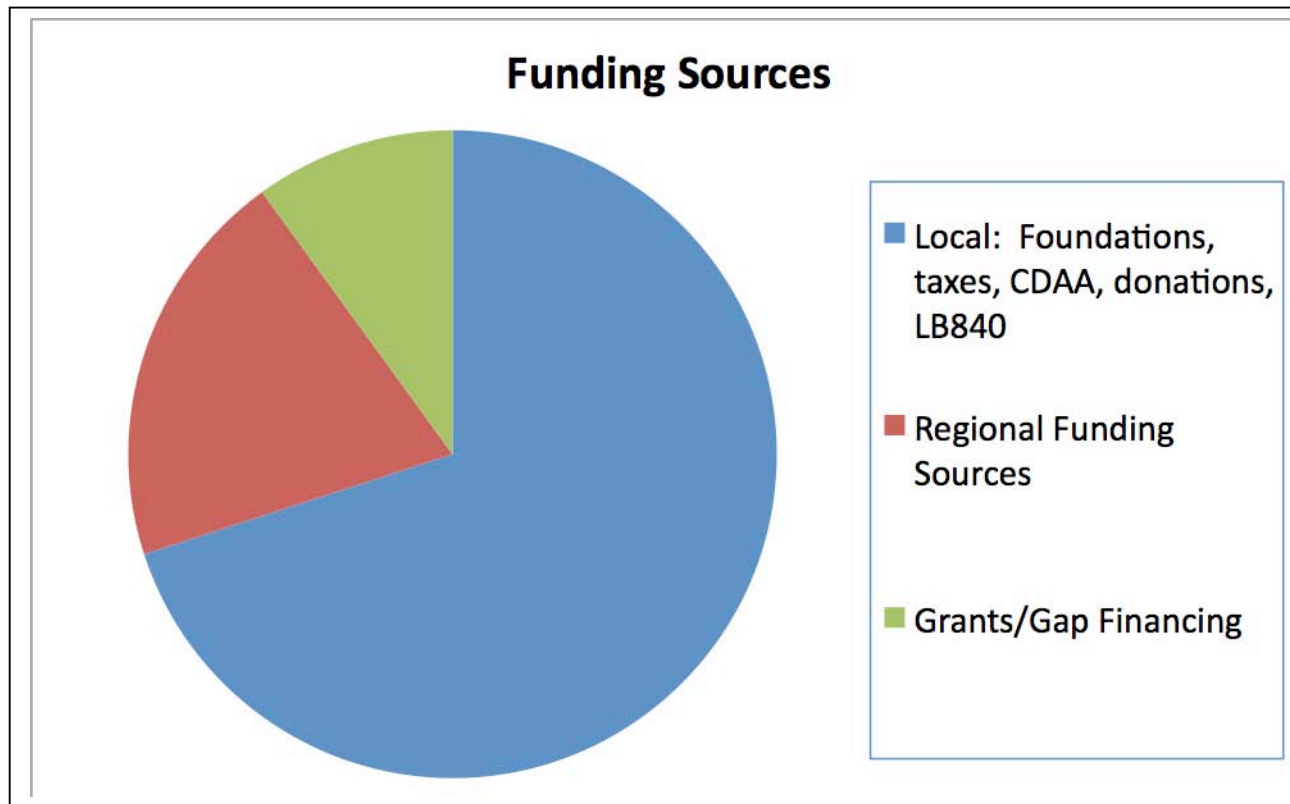
SAMPLE: PLANNING PROCESS WORKSHEET

Preliminary Task Identification	Time Line	Person(s) Responsible
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

SAMPLE: DEVELOPING YOUR FUNDING SOURCES WORKSHEET

List action items along with required resources and sources. You may want to contact respective Development Districts to assist with locating various financing sources.

Action Item	Required Financing	Source
Sample: Conduct Community Survey	*Printing and Distribution Costs ($300.00)*	*Central Bank Donation*
Action Item	**Required Financing**	**Source**
Action Item	**Required Financing**	**Source**
Action Item	**Required Financing**	**Source**
Action Item	**Required Financing**	**Source**
Action Item	**Required Financing**	**Source**

SUCCESSFUL FUNDING OPTIONS

Funding Sources

Legend:
- **Local:** Foundations, taxes, CDAA, donations, LB840
- **Regional Funding Sources**
- **Grants/Gap Financing**

Successful development efforts depend on local ownership and investment. When developing funding sources for your project, look to local and regional sources first, and consider federal or state grant sources as gap financing only.

SAMPLE: DEVELOPING YOUR COMMUNICATION PLAN

Describe your plan for sharing organizational goals and action plans with the community. How will you receive feedback and input? How will your organization remain accountable to stakeholders and community residents?

By using news releases, town hall meetings, and opportunities to speak at civic clubs, your organization can present a persuasive case for supporting the proposed plan of action. These communication opportunities should include the funding rationale and how the goals support and benefit the community. The communication plan is also an important tool for volunteer recruitment.

A successful communication campaign will include:

1. **This goal is important to our community because:** _____.

2. **A presentation of the issue background:** This provides assurance that the issues have been thoroughly researched and the plan isn't a "shoot-from-the-hip" response.

3. **"How We Can Succeed":** An outline of the resources (human, financial, etc.)

4. **"There's a Place for You!":** Make sure that your communication plan also challenges interested individuals to invest financially or with volunteer time.

PART III: "THE BIG FIVE" – A CASE STUDY APPROACH

Now it is time to look at how residents can work together to improve their community. In this section, you will be asked to complete a series of case studies on five subjects:

- Employment/Local Economic Development
- Housing
- Health
- Education
- Government (local, regional, state)

These "Big Five" areas of development and public strategy are factors in every community, regardless of size. Goals of this "Big Five" exercise are:

To gain insight into the public policies governing community life; and
To develop strategies that improve the life of your community/region through a greater understanding of these issues.

"The Big Five" issues can be examined by using one of three approaches:

1. Invite policymakers and area professionals to your session meeting to discuss current issues in the field;
2. Use case studies to help work on examples of issues in these five areas;
3. Integrate the case study approach and invite policymakers/professionals to serve as panel resources.

If relying on panelists, you may wish to invite a number of panelists for each topic to present on an assigned day. Ask questions about how they may be able to help you solve specific issues in your community or explain some current trends in a particular subject area of choice.

When using the case study approach, you should work on selected studies as "homework" assignments, bringing research and comments to the meeting to be used as consensus agenda items … meaning that you will be required to formulate action items, processes, and recommendations around each of the selected case studies. You may either use the case studies provided, or create your own studies based on current issues in your community and/or region.

To use the combination case study/policy panel approach, select a study to be used as the point of discussion and discovery during the session meeting. Be prepared to share those case studies with guest panelist/speakers in advance.

Case Studies – Economic Development Issues
(Please use the Strategic Planning section as your guide in preparing your final analysis and plan)

1. During the past decade, the community of *Pleasantville* has seen its population decline. Now with a population of fewer than 1,000, several store front businesses and individual properties have fallen into disrepair and residents fear the eventual loss of essential services. While the community doesn't have a formal Economic Development organization, it has a Community Betterment group that meets the first Monday of the month for lunch. How would you develop a plan that addresses community revitalization and secures the community's vital services?

2. Your community's downtown business district is dominated by locally- and family-owned businesses. A recent, informal business survey reveals that nearly half of these business owners will reach retirement age within the next five to seven years. Develop a business succession plan for these community businesses.

3. A manufacturer in your community has just announced the need to expand its current facility to accommodate new projected growth. The new plan for expansion includes a proposal to add 25-40 new jobs. The company's present facility sits just outside the city limits. The company is asking the city to provide $250,000 for infrastructure and property improvements. What assistance, if any, will or can the community provide? What are the issues? What local, state, and federal resources are available and how will these be applied?

4. Tourism is a major economic booster for many communities, providing a larger tax base to complete community projects and helping to grow local businesses. Your community's festival has experienced decreasing attendance during the past five years. There is a lack of volunteers willing to commit time to the planning and execution of the event. What can your community do to continue to attract tourism and generate income to the community?

5. One of your community's major employers has just announced they are closing their local operations. Describe possible strategies for transitional management relations; employee retention; and facility marketing.

6. Define and develop a strategy around a current community issue.

Case Study – Economic Development and Community Appearance
(Please use the strategic planning section as your guide in preparing your final analysis and plan)

The physical appearance of a community is often a good barometer of its economic energy, civic pride, and the engagement of its government. Community appearance is an important consideration for businesses and industries considering making investments in the community, and is a significant contributor to the quality of life of for its residents.

1. C*enterville,* a community of 1,100, has seen considerable deterioration of its downtown square over the past 15 years. The square, built around a city park, once provided the retail hub for the county. Today, many of the buildings are in disrepair and most the sidewalks around the square are in poor condition. Along main residential streets, yard waste and the accumulation of cars have become eye sores. Main entrances to the city and town square lack signage.

Centerville's assets include a K-12 school, a small grocery store that anchors one corner of the square, and a library less than 10 years old. *Centerville* is also the home to a large implement dealer and two small-to-medium industries.

Create a strategy for a community revitalization program which identifies any agencies (Federal, state, or local sources, as well as non-profits), and local stakeholders you might ask for input and assistance. How would you begin a coordinated planning activity for *Centerville?*

Case Study: Economic Development and Technology
(Please use the Strategic Planning section as your guide in preparing your final analysis and plan)

Public infrastructure has always been a traditional center piece in local and regional economic prosperity. Communities with good schools, quality health care, road and transportation accessibility, acknowledge the benefits of these quality of life investments. Today, that infrastructure must also include technology. What is it and how does it affect the local economy?

Because technology now encompasses all aspects of regional community and economic development, it is vital that regions develop a comprehensive technology infrastructure plan.   Local leadership need to understand how technology affects the larger economy of the region and its importance to retaining and recruiting population:

 ➢ To compete in a global economy, firms must constantly innovate and maximize the use of technology in the workplace (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 2004). Investment by local governments and development organizations to provide access to technology generators is vital to supporting and sustaining innovation in the local economy.

 ➢ How does broad, affordable access to technology create a prosperous community?

A sound plan for increasing a community/region's technology infrastructure will include a focus on the following:

 - Do local businesses have access to global markets?
 - Does the local workforce have the technology skills required for 21st century employment?
 - Is there technology infrastructure to support new business innovation (broadband, wireless)?
 - Does your region leverage the technology capabilities of your local or regional colleges and universities?
 - Is there adequate infrastructure to promote local entrepreneurial activity?
 - How do your K-12 students keep pace with technology in the classroom?
 - Is there broad, affordable access to high speed internet throughout the region?
 - Does your community/region have a good quality web site?

Beyond business requirements and developing workforce skills, technology advances also ensure a higher quality of life for community residents through:

- **Availability of On-line education and on-line library and training sources**
- **Community knowledge networks (e.g., on-line business directories; on-line newspaper; local web directories; on-line community events calendars, etc.)**
- **Technology advances for first responders (police, fire, medical)**
- **Tourism promotion of the region through web sources**

The following exercises and case studies are designed to provide your leadership group with a basic knowledge of your region's technology investments, as well as help shape the framework for future planning.

Case Study - Technology & Economic Development:

A newly formed economic development committee is tasked with providing input on how to integrate a technology focus in the region's economic development plan. Several concerns have been raised and members of the committee have heard from county residents as well as local businesses regarding technology concerns. Two issues have surfaced:

1) The region's unequal access to high speed internet. Recognizing the need to address both rural and city interests, as well as address the needs of residents, business and agri-business, the committee members realize that they have little concrete knowledge of broadband distribution and use throughout the county. Your leadership group has been asked to provide evidence and guidance to this technology committee on these gaps.

2) Technology and Workforce skills. A recent Business Survey has revealed that several technology-dependant positions have remained unfilled in the local manufacturing and business community. Your leadership group has been asked to provide a technology-use survey of the local manufacturing community and recommendations for workforce skill development.

To be able to build on your region's strengths, identify areas in which the region can excel. Focus on opportunities that meet the market needs of local industries to maximize economic impact.

Recommend how leverage partnerships (universities, colleges, business organizations) can help formulate tech-knowledge transfer into workforce development skills.

1) Which relevant stakeholders should provide input to this committee?

2) Outline preliminary goals for each task.

3) How will your group prioritize these issues?

Case Studies – Community Housing Issues

(Please use the Strategic Planning section as your guide in preparing your final analysis and plan)

Without available housing, it is difficult, if not impossible, to recruit new residents to a community. Also, a community must pay close attention to the condition of its housing stock to maintain a picture of the community's overall well-being. With the current unstable housing market status, and increasing housing foreclosures, communities must have a strong housing development strategy.

1. Identify a potential housing activity (for example, the development of second story housing in the downtown/central business district). Assess the market for this activity (owner and tenant profile). Conduct a SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities & Threats) analysis. Determine the following:
    - Infrastructure Requirements
    - Regulatory Requirements
    - Funding Sources
    - Sustainability Issues
    - How Local Business and Citizens Will Support This Activity

2. A local business would like to expand its operations by hiring an additional 20-30 full-time employees. The jobs will pay slightly above the statewide average. There is a lack of available workforce in your community and to allow the business to expand there, workforce availability needs to be addressed. A common complaint of prospective residents is the lack of mid-ranged affordable housing. State and federal housing assistance programs often require residents to qualify as low-to-moderate income wage earners which will not be the case with these jobs. While there are several potential single-family homes currently owned or rented by elderly residents they don't want to move out of the community and currently there is no senior housing available in the community. How can you address the issues of creating more jobs, growing your local economy and providing housing for potential new employees?

Case Studies – Community Health Issues
(Please use the Strategic Planning section as your guide in preparing your final analysis and plan)

Health care delivery has undergone vast changes. With the rapid pace of technological advancements in medicine, rising insurance costs, and the availability of new medical specializations, small towns are struggling to attract and keep rural physicians.

1. Two of three family physicians now serving the county health clinic have indicated that they will retire within the next three years. Develop possible strategies for recruiting two additional physicians to fill these vacancies. Define the service needs of your community and outline necessary resources and possible areas of collaboration.

2. Your local county hospital is in need of more nursing staff, lab technicians, and medical records staff. Though several residents and graduating seniors have expressed an interest in these careers, the nearest community college to offer such degrees or training is located some distance away.   Develop strategies to meet the needs of both the hospital and citizens interested in these job opportunities.

3. Access to adequate, broad spectrum health care, including infant wellness programs, geriatrics care, dental, vision, emergency services, and the availability of general health care is an essential component in the economic well-being of any community. Define how each of these areas is currently being met within your community, as well as any potential future risks and opportunities and strategies for confronting them.

Case Studies – Education Issues

(Please use the Strategic Planning section as your guide in preparing your final analysis and plan)

School districts are often the largest employer in smaller communities, and the staff and students become a major customer base for local businesses. In addition, the actual school facilities and extra curricular activities held in them provide communities with venues in which to host, as well as hold, sporting, musical, and drama events to attend. Perhaps most importantly, schools serve as a valuable community leadership resource. School principals, superintendents, teachers, and staff provide leadership in many community civic organizations, local governmental boards, and churches. School systems provide vital community infrastructure.

1. Your region's economic survey was recently completed and the results are disappointing. People are leaving the county to find better paying jobs in a larger community 50 miles away. Not only are local employers having a difficult time filling positions, but residents fear that continued declining school enrollments will force consolidation.

   A. How can your organization work with the school administration, local employers, residents, and government officials to develop solutions or compromises?

   B. What kind of strategies can you develop that provide entrepreneurial training linking school instructional curriculum and community development projects?

2. The technological environment of today's public schools should match the technological expectations of the work life that students encounter post graduation. This also ensures that schools and their staff remain up-to-date with the most advanced equipment, too. Your school district, however, is having difficulty meeting basic needs and the technology budget is nearly non-existent. To keep your staff and student proficiency levels competitive your school district needs to address this critical issue.

   Develop an action plan and strategies to address this critical school and community concern.

Case Studies – Governmental Issues

To fund ongoing state expenditures, legislator-approved programs, and aid to local governments, money must be available in the State of Nebraska budget. Every Biennium (two years) the legislature agrees on a state budget. In fact, the primary constitutional duty of the Legislature is to pass and balance the state budget, which includes a list of all programs to be funded and the amounts to be spent on each program.

Thousands of funding requests are sent to the Legislature from agencies and entities that receive state aid and government officials must prioritize these requests. For example, the Governor submits a series of budget recommendations in the form of legislative bills introduced by individual state senators to the Legislature early in the beginning of each biennium.

All funding or appropriations requests are submitted to the Legislature's Appropriations Committee, which reviews the bills. Legislative Fiscal Office staff review the requests and prepare briefings for legislators and members of the Appropriations Committee, who receive these briefings in January and February. The committee submits a set of preliminary recommendations 20 to 30 days after the Governor's budget submission and holds public hearings on the budget. Then a final package of recommendations is submitted to the Legislature either in the form of amendments to the Governor's legislation or as new bills. Most appropriations come in the form of one large bill that can be as long as 200 pages.

At the same time as this process, legislators are reviewing other bills not submitted as a part of the budget, but still requiring money to make them operational. The Fiscal Office attaches a fiscal note to each bill to estimate how much money the bill will cost. If a committee advances a bill that has a monetary or fiscal impact, a companion bill requesting an appropriation is introduced. (**Source: Nebraskalegislature.gov**)

Critical Thinking Exercise

Pretend you are a legislator with a yearly budget of $10 million. The list below identifies the programs that received funding during the previous year. You can spend less than your $10 million allotment on programs this year, but you cannot go above this number.

1.	Funding for new textbook purchases	$1,000,000
2.	Aid to farmers in areas with drought	$3,000,000
3.	Replacement of old school buses	$2,000,000
4.	Aid to impoverished children	$5,000,000
5.	Repairs on Nebraska highways	$2,500,000
6.	Purchase of land for state park development	$1,500,000

What programs would you fund? Why?

What programs will receive no funding? Why?

How difficult were these decisions for you to make? Why or why not?

Case #1

A group of farmers in your county have conducted informal research related to neighboring state exemptions on farm equipment. They concluded that to stay competitive, Nebraska should eliminate the personal property tax on farm equipment. They argue that since farm equipment is used seasonally (an average of fewer than 400 hours per year), Nebraska's personal property tax on farm equipment places them at an unfair competitive disadvantage when compared to farm operations in neighboring/border agricultural states. In order to introduce this concern as legislation:

1. Develop this issue in the form of proposed legislation and how you would move the proposal forward (hire a lobbyist, etc.?).

2. Explain how you would build a support network to help pass the proposed legislation. Who are your senators? How would you communicate and work with these local representatives?

3. Develop your potential verbal testimony for the committee hearing and floor debate.

4. Identify your opponents and how you will address the opposition.

5. Explain how your business or activities would change after approval.

Case #2:

There are several dilapidated houses in your community that pose a serious health and safety threat to residents, as well as create an eye-sore for those passing through the community. The majority of houses are empty and have out-of-town and hard to reach owners. The community does not currently have a housing strategy. How can the community address the housing concern? Define your community action plan for dealing with dilapidated housing. What action needs to be taken to enforce codes?

PART IV: THE COMMUNITY CAPSTONE PROJECT

"In a sense, the implementation of the economic development plan is the ultimate test of what has gone before in the planning process."
(Bendavid-Val, Avrom. 1980)

The Community Capstone Project is the culminating piece of the Nebraska Community Improvement Program Leadership Development Challenge Handbook. Using tools and learning outcomes from the previous sessions, the Community Capstone Project is an opportunity to apply what you have learned by implementing and completing a community-based project. This is the "transformational" part of the program in which your group will:

1. Select a project. What do you want to achieve?

2. Outline your processes and resources. How will you achieve your plan? What is the timetable for the plan? Who will be involved? What resource will be required?

3. Legitimize your project. Describe your communication plan, including the active involvement of the community during the project, strategies for keeping the community informed, and participation across generations.

4. Evaluate. What are your measurements for success? What were the impacts? What lessons were learned? How can you improve the process?

After identifying a community/regional issue and designing an implementation plan, your group's project documentation and progress can be submitted to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. While the basic form of the Capstone Project is narrative, few simple forms are available to help provide the basis of your submission. These forms will chart the leadership and planning skills you have learned through this program and will become part of the **Nebraska Success Story** project, to be shared with other communities around the state.

Submitting Your Community Project

Actions Plan Details

Please attach documentation for the following activities:

1. The Action Plan for your Capstone project. Provide a brief narrative of the scope of the plan and why this particular project was chosen. Documentation of community input and other supporting data should accompany this narrative.

2. Provide detail for all resources (human, financial, etc.) for your project, including the identification of team members, documentation of public/private partnerships, volunteer outreach plans, and a record of the resources necessary for project completion.

3. Planning guides (see following) can be used to organize and arrange the Action Plan outline for submission to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

4. Evaluation and Next Step Follow up.

Community Capstone Project Plan Summary

Project Name:
Community/Regional Area:

Goal Identification	Issue/Change (Why)	
1.		
2.		
3.		
Task Research – Special Skills/Information Needed	**Resources Available**	
1.		
2.		
3.		
Preliminary Task Identification	**Time Line**	**Person(s) Responsible**
1.		
2.		
3.		

DEFINE FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

Define Resource and Funding Requirements	
Goal/Task	**Funding Requirements**
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

APPENDICES

Project Photos, Marketing Information, Press Releases, Etc.

COMMUNITY CAPSTONE REPORT APPROVALS

Prepared By   _____

Approved By   _____
                        (Title)

                       _____
                        (Title)

                       _____
                        (Title)

Approval Date   _____

Date Submitted to Nebraska Department of Economic Development _____

Nebraska Department of Economic Development
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